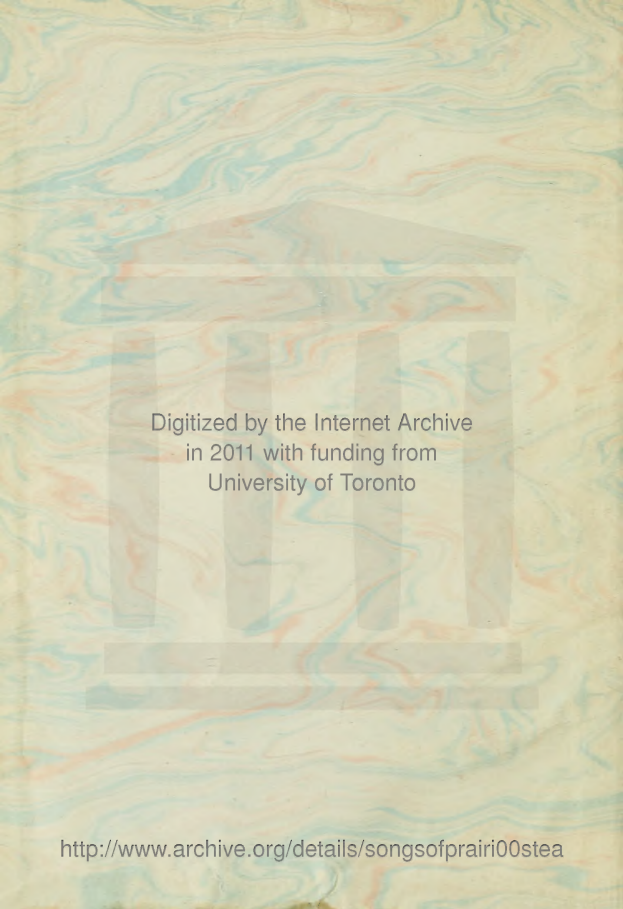


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• Songs •
OF THE PRAIRIE

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Walters P 138
Poetry

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“Where only the sky is above you,
And only the distance in view.”

**SONGS OF THE
.. PRAIRIE ..**

BY
ROBERT J. C. STEAD

Author of "Prairie Born,"
"The Empire Builders."



TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1911

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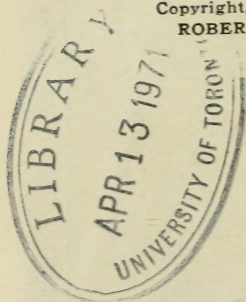
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1911

SONG OF THE
PRAIRIE

BY
ROBERT J. C. STEAD
Author of "Prairie Home"
"The Empire Builder"

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ROBERT J. C. STEAD



TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIDGES
1911

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THE PRAIRIE

THE PRAIRIE.

THE City? Oh, yes, the City
Is a good enough place for a while,
It fawns on the clever and witty,
And welcomes the rich with a smile;
It lavishes money as water,
It boasts of its palace and hall,
But the City is only the daughter—
The Prairie is mother of all!

The City is all artificial,
Its life is a fashion-made fraud,
Its wisdom, though learned and judicial,
Is far from the wisdom of God;
Its hope is the hope of ambition,
Its lust is the lust to acquire,
And the larger it grows, its condition
Sinks lower in pestilent mire.

THE PRAIRIE

The City is cramped and congested,
The haunt and the covert of crime;
The Prairie is broad, unmolested,
It points to the high and sublime;
Where only the sky is above you,
And only the distance in view,
With no one to jostle or shove you—
It's there a man learns to be true!

Where the breeze whispers over the willows,
Or sighs in the dew-laden grass,
And the rain-clouds, like big, stormy bil-
lows,
Besprinkle the land as they pass;
With the smudge-fire alight in the distance,
The wild-duck alert on the stream,
Where life is a psalm of existence,
And opulence only a dream.

Where wide as the plan of creation
The Prairies stretch ever away,
And beckon a broad invitation
To fly to their bosom, and stay;
The prairie-fire smell in the gloaming—
The water-wet wind in the spring—
An empire untrod for the roaming—
Ah, this is a life for a king!

THE PRAIRIE

When peaceful and pure as a river
They lie in the light of the moon,
You know that the Infinite Giver
Is stringing your spirit a-tune;
That life is not told in the telling,
That death does not whisper adieu,
And deep in your bosom up-welling,
You know that the Promise is true!

To those who have seen it and smelt it,
To those who have loved it alone,
To those who have known it and felt it—
The Prairie is ever their own;
And far though they wander, unwary,
Far, far from the breath of the plain,
A thought of the wind on the Prairie
Will set their blood rushing again.

Then you to the City who want it,
Go, grovel its gain-glutted streets,
Be one of the ciphers that haunt it,
Or sit in its opulent seats;
But for me, where the Prairies are reaching
As far as the vision can scan—
Ah, that is the prayer and the preaching
That goes to the heart of a man!

THE PLOUGH

THE PLOUGH

WHAT power is this that stands behind the
steel?—

A homely implement of blade and wheel—
Neglected by the margin of the way,
And flashing back the blaze of dying day;
Or dragging slow across the yellow field
In silent prophecy of lavish yield,
It marks the pace of innocence and toil,
And taps the boundless treasure of the soil.

Before you came the red-man rode the
plain,
Untitled lord of Nature's great domain;
The shaggy herds, knee-deep in mellow
grass,
The lazy summer hours were wont to pass;
The wild-goose nested by the water-side;
The red deer roamed upon the prairie wide;
The black bear trod the woods in solemn
might;
The lynx stole through the bushes in the
night.

THE PLOUGH

No sound of toil was heard in all the land;
No joyous laugh of voice or sharp command;
No cloud of smoke from iron funnels
 thrown
Was through the autumn hazes gently
 blown;
No edge of steel tore up the virgin sod;
No church its shining finger turned to
 God;
No tradesman labored over bench and
 tool;
No children chattered on their way to
 school.

But all the land lay desolate and bare,
Its wealth of plain, its forest riches rare
Ungessed by those who saw it through
 their tears,
And Nature—miser of a thousand years—
Was adding still to her immense reserve
That shall supply the world with brawn
 and nerve:
But all lay silent, useless, and unused,
And useless 'twas because it was unused.

You came. Straightway the silent plain
Grew mellow with the glow of golden
 grain;

THE PLOUGH

The axes in the solitary wood
Rang out where stately oak and maple
stood;
The land became alive with busy din,
And as the many settled, more came in;
The world looked on in wonder and dis-
may—
The building of a nation in a day!

By lake and river, rock and barren waste,
A peaceful army toiled in eager haste;
Ten thousand workers sweating in the sun
Pressed on the task so recently begun;
Their outworks every day were forced
ahead—
And every day they gave their toll of
dead—
Until at length the double lines of steel
Received the steaming steed and whirling
wheel!

Where yesterday the lazy bison lay
A city glitters in the sun to-day;
His paths are turned to streets of wood
and stone,
And thousands tread the way he trod
alone;

THE PLOUGH

The mighty hum of industry and trade
Fills all the place where once he held
 parade,
And far away the unheard river's play
Makes joyous night still brighter than the
 day!

Upon the plains a thousand towns arise,
And quickly each to be a city tries;
The sound of trade is heard on every hand,
And sturdy men rise to possess the land;
Awhile they lingered, thinking it a dream,
But now they flow in a resistless stream
That seems to fill the prairie far and near,
Yet in its vastness soon they disappear.

Where once the silent red-man spurned the
 ground
A land of peace and plenty now is found.
A land by Nature destined to be great,
Where every man is lord of his estate;
Where men may dwell together in accord.
And honest toil receive its due reward;
Where loyal friends and happy homes are
 made.
And culture follows hard the feet of trade.

THE PLOUGH

This you have made it: Is it vain to
 hope
The sons of such a land will climb and
 grope
Along the undiscovered ways of life,
And neither seek nor be found shunning
 strife,
But ever, beckoned by a high ideal,
Press onward, upward, till they make it
 real;
With feet sure planted on their native sod,
And will and aspirations linked with God?

THE MOTHERING

THE MOTHERING.

I had lain untrod for a million years from
the line to the Arctic sea;
I had dreamed strange dreams of the vast
unknown,
Of the lispng wind and the dancing zone
Where the Northland fairies' feet had
flown,
And it all seemed good to me.

At the close of a thousand eons of sleep
came a pang that was strange to me;
The pang of a new life in my breast,
The swell of a vast and a vague unrest,
And it thrilled my soul from East to West
As it fluttered to be free.

But I steeled my heart to the biped thing;
of vast presumption he:
He would lure my lonely thoughts away,
He would sport himself on the sacred clay
Where the dust of the prehistoric lay;
But he scorned the soul of me.

THE MOTHERING

So I stretched my plains for a thousand
leagues from the mountains to the
sea;

But he rolled them back with a steel-laid
line,

And he crumbled space by man's design,
And he filled his life with the breath of
mine;

But his love he gave not me.

Then I called him foes from the farthest
north and the snowflake fluttered
free;

But he took him trees I had given birth,
And he delved him coal from my bowels of
earth,

And he laughed at me as he sat in mirth;
But he cursed the cold of me.

Then I cut him off from his fellow-men
that his thought might turn to me;
But he strung him a line of copper thread,
And his fire-shod words swung overhead.
By the fiend of air his thought was spread
O'er hill, and plain, and lea.

Then I gave him hopes he could not define
and fears that he could not flee;
And he heard my cry in the long, still
night.

THE MOTHERING

In my spirit-thrall I held him tight,
And his blind soul-eyes craved for the
light;
But the light he could not see.

So I held my peace till I saw him sit with
children at his knee;
And I sent them the sun, the wind and the
rain,
And the ferny slope and the flowery plain,
And the wet night-smell of the growing
grain;
And their love they gave to me.

In the last race-birth of the sons of men a
travail holdeth me:
But out of the night of pain and tears
A new life comes with the rolling years;
And I fondle the child of my hope and
fears,
And it seemeth good to me.

HUSTLIN' IN MY JEANS

HUSTLIN' IN MY JEANS.

YES, I'm holdin' down the homestead here
an' roughin' it a bit,
It seems the only kind o' life that I was
built to fit,
For it's thirty years last summer since I
staked my first preserve,
An' I reckon on the whole I've prospered
more than I deserve;
An' my friends kep' naggin' at me for to
quit this toil an' strife
An' to settle in the city for the balance of
my life,
An' I ain't compelled to labor—I've cached
a wad of beans—
But I'm happier when I'm hustlin' on the
homestead in my jeans.

HUSTLIN' IN MY JEANS

I've tried to loaf an' like it, an' I've tried
to swell about

Where the boozey run to red-eye an' the
greedy run to gout,

An' I've tried to wear a collar an' a fancy
fly-net vest,

An' I've tried to think it pleasant just to
sit around an' rest;

An' I've mingled with the nabobs an' hee-
hawed with other guys

That were just as sick as I was of a life
of livin' lies;

I've mingled in society an' peeked behind
the scenes—

An' I'm happier when I'm hustlin' on the
homestead in my jeans.

Then I got the lust for roamin' an' I rum-
maged round the earth.

An' I got a big experience an' corre-
spondin' girth,

But the more I roved an' rambled the less
I cared to live,

An' I only kep' on goin' cause I'd no
alternative;

I learned through tips an' tickets an' the
jostle of the cars

That I wouldn't trade a homestead for a
continent in Mars;

HUSTLIN' IN MY JEANS

An' I bid good-bye to Fashion an' her
social kings an' queens,
An' I filed my second homestead an' I
bought a pair of jeans.

'Course it's sometimes kind o' lonely on
the prairie here alone,
When the night-time settles round you an'
your thoughts are all your own,
An' old faces flit before you like a flock
o' homin' birds,
An' your heart swells with emotion that no
man can put in words,
An' you ponder on the Why-for, the Be-
ginnin', an' the End;
An' you know the only things worth while
are Family an' Friend—
From the trifles of existence your better
judgment weans,
An' you get the right perspective on the
homestead—in your jeans.

There are days the sweat-drops glisten on
this sun-burned hand of mine,
There are nights the joints go creakin' as
I crawl to bed, at nine,

HUSTLIN' IN MY JEANS

But I hear the horses' stampin' and the
rap of Collie's tail,
An' it minds me of the Eighties an' the Old
Commission Trail—
Of the days we pledged our future to a
land we hardly knew,
An' the men whose brave beginnings made
prosperity for you;
There are men now worth their millions I
remember in their teens,
An' they made their start by hustlin' on the
homestead in their jeans.

There are times when most folks figure
that their life has been a blank;
You may be a homeless hobo or director of
a bank,
But the thought will catch you nappin'—
catch you sometime unawares—
That your life has been a failure, and that
no one really cares;
That the world will roll without you till
the Resurrection morn,
An' that no one would have missed you if
you never had been born;
An' I give you my conclusion—all that
livin' really means
Is revealed to those who hustle on the
homestead in their jeans.

HUSTLIN' IN MY JEANS

Some day I reckon I'll cash in an' file an-
other claim
Where the wicked cease from troublin' an'
the good get in the game;
Where the pews are not allotted by the
fashion of your dress,
An' the only thing that figures is inherent
manliness—
Give me no silk-spangled horses an' no
silver-plated hearse,
But let some student preacher read a bit
of Scripture verse,
An' find a sunny hillside where the water-
willow screens,
An' plant me on the homestead where I
hustled—in my jeans.

THE HOMESTEADER

THE HOMESTEADER.

FAR away from the din of the city,
I dwell on the prairie alone,
With no one to praise or to pity,
And all the broad earth for my own;
The fields to allure me to labor,
The shanty to shelter my sleep,
A league and a half to a neighbor—
And Collie to watch if I weep.

Yes, this is my place of probation,
Though woefully windy and bare;
I am lord of my own habitation,
I mock at the meaning of care;
For here, on the edge of creation,
Lies, far as the vision can fling,
A kingdom that's fit for a nation—
A kingdom—and I am the king!

The grasses aglare in the morning
With crystalline radiance shine;
The dew-drops are jewels adorning,
Are jewels—and the jewels are mine;
The heat of the sun when it shineth,
The wet of the wind when it rains,
Are balm to the heart that repineth—
The Medicine-Men of the plains!

THE HOMESTEADER

I follow the plough in the breaking,
I tap the rich treasures of Time—
The treasure is here for the taking,
And taking it isn't a crime;
I ride on the rack or the reaper
To harvest the fruit of my hand,
And daily I know that the deeper
I'm rooting my soul in the land.

They say there is wealth in the doing,
That royal and rich are the gains,
But 't isn't the wealth I am wooing
So much as the life of the plains;
For here in the latter-day morning,
Where Time to Eternity clings,
Midwife to a breed in the borning,
I behold the Beginnings of Things!

When, reckless of time and of trouble,
I watch till the water-fowl comes,
Or, picking my steps in the stubble,
I steal where the prairie-hen drums;
When shooting the wolf in the brushes,
Or spearing the pike in the stream,
Or potting the crane in the rushes—
Ambition seems only a dream.

When darkness envelops creation,
And shadows lie deep on the plain,

THE HOMESTEADER

I sit in my rude habitation
And ponder my childhood again;
Then voices come out of the distance,
Far voices from over the sea,
They call from the depths of existence—
I know they are calling to me!

The voices of song and of motion,
The voices of laughter and light,
They're calling from over the ocean—
Oh, God! could I answer to-night!
The voices of friend and of lover,
The voices I knew in the past—
I turn to my pallet to smother
The thoughts that have found me at last!

.

*Greater than the measure of the heroes of
renown,
He is building for the future, and no hand
can hold him down;
Though they count him but a common
man, he holds the Outer Gate,
And posterity will own him as the father
of the State.*

GOD'S SIGNALMAN

GOD'S SIGNALMAN.

WELL, no, I'm not superstitious,—at least,
I don't call it that,—
But when someone spins a creepy yarn I
don't deny it flat,
For a man who spends a lifetime with the
throttle in his hand
Is bound to have adventures that he cannot
understand;
I sometimes think our knowledge here is
but a sorry show,—
We're only on the borderland of what
there is to know.

I used to think a man could know all
things that could be known;
That he should not acknowledge any power
above his own;
That, however strange the circumstance,
there always is a cause

GOD'S SIGNALMAN

That is in complete obedience, to some of
Nature's laws;
But I couldn't shake conviction off, no
matter how I tried,
And I've changed my way of thinking since
the night that Willie died.

Yes, Willie was my little son—my greatest
earthly joy—
And wife and I just kind o' seemed to dote
upon the boy;
When I was out on duty she would hover
round the lad,
And treasure up his sayings to repeat them
to his dad;
And every night, at lighting time, I knew
that, without fail,
His baby lips were praying for the man
out on the rail. . . .

Ah, well, for three short years we knew
what such a treasure is,
And we grew ever more attached to those
sweet ways of his;
When one day, swinging through the gate,
I saw, with blanching face,

GOD'S SIGNALMAN

My wife as 'pale as ashes, and a doctor in
the place. . . .
I tried to go in steady, but my knees were
knocking hard,
And the light went out of heaven as I
staggered up the yard.

The doctor was a friend of mine, with
children of his own,
But he didn't need to tell me, for a blind
man would have known
By the labored, quick-caught breathing,
and the little burning brow,
That the Visitor was ready and was wait-
ing for him now.
We sat about his bedside in silent, deep
despair,
And the years rolled down upon us as we
faced each other there.

'Twas a little before midnight when a ring
came at the bell,
And the call-boy said, "Excuse me, sir, but
I was sent to tell
That Ninety-six is waiting, and there's no
one else about;

GOD'S SIGNALMAN

They're expecting you to take her. If you
don't she can't go out."
I left the answer to my wife. With lips as
white as snow,
She whispered, "Do your duty," and I said,
"All right, I'll go."

My fireman knew my trouble, and in
rough-and-ready way
He let me know his heart was feeling
things he couldn't say;
The night was dark and moonless, but the
bright stars overhead
Seemed to whisper to each other. "His
little boy is dead."
The very locomotive seemed to read my
thoughts aright,
And the monster sobbed in sympathy as we
bulleted the night.

We'd been running fast and steady till a
little after two;
All the passengers were fast asleep, except,
perhaps, a few
Who sat a-swapping stories in the smoker,
when a sight

GOD'S SIGNALMAN

Met my eyes that fairly froze my blood in
terror and affright—
For there, before me, standing in the halo
of the light
Was a little child outlined against the
blackness of the night!

Oh, I could not be mistaken, I would know
him anywhere,
With his father's mouth and forehead, and
his mother's eyes and hair,
And little arms outstretched to me that
seemed to coax and say,
"Come, Daddy, come and kiss me, for I'm
going far away."
I flung the brake and throttle, and amid
the hissing steam
The vision grew, and waned away, and
vanished as a dream!

My fireman was beside me: "Your nerve
is going, Jack;
Let's leave the engine here and take a walk
along the track.
The exercise will do you good." I fol-
lowed as he led,

GOD'S SIGNALMAN

Until we reached the gorge about a hundred yards ahead:

The night wind cooled my temples as we walked the bridge upon,

Till we sudden stopped with a sudden gasp—

—THE CENTRE SPAN WAS GONE!

.

You may call it hallucination, as some of the others do,

But I know that the Master took my boy that night at half-past two;

And the prayers of a hundred passengers had been offered up in vain

Had his spirit, clad in his baby dress, not stood before my train. . . .

I know I cried in my window-seat, and was otherwise ill-behaved,

But the life that I lost was more to me than all the lives he saved.

GOING HOME

GOING HOME.

THE village lights grew dim behind, the
snow lay vast and white,
And silent as an icy shroud spread out
upon the night;
A wan moon struggled with the clouds, and
through the misty haze
The trails that branched to left and right
were tangled as a maze;
The settler's horses plodded in the soft,
uncertain snow;
And, stealing cautiously behind, a Thing
moved to and fro.

The trail was little travelled, and the pale,
sad, sickly light
Was hindrance, rather than a help, to read
the road aright;
A dozen miles lay stretched between the
settler and his shack:
He thought of many things that night—not
once of turning back.
Above the crunching of the snow he heard
the rising wind,
But never looked—and never saw—the
Thing that stole behind.

GOING HOME

The trail was lost; the horses took their
way across the plain;
The settler strove to hold the course, but
strove, alas, in vain;
The fickle wind seemed scarce to stay a
moment at a place—
Now howling in a rear attack, now snap-
ping at his face;
And nearing, leering, peering, in the
ghastly, ghostly light,
The Thing came softly after as it followed
in the night.

A light! a light! a welcome light gleamed
friendly from afar:
Oh, can it be—it cannot be—'tis surely not
a star?
Nay, nay, it is more warm and near, a
happy farmer's home
That beckons to the wanderer, "You need
no longer roam."
With eager hope they hastened on, and
plied across the plain;
As often as the horses fell they rose to
plunge again.

The hours moved on, the miles moved on,
they followed as a dream
The waning light, the dying light, of that
deceitful gleam,

GOING HOME

And when at last it seemed the place must
almost be in sight,
The light went out! Oh, perfidy! Oh,
murderous, mocking light!
'Twas well the ears grew deaf before the
howling of the wind,
Nor heard the ghoulish chuckle of the
gloating Thing behind.

The snow lay deep; the horses floundered
with the heavy sleigh,
Till, plunging in a sudden drift, they tore
the tongue away;
The sleepy driver knew it not, as through
his nerveless hands
His hold on life was slipping with the
frozen leather bands.
The night was calm and beautiful, the
frost had ceased to smart.
*The Thing had leapt upon him and was
tearing at his heart!*

.

The room was warm and cosy, and the
light was soft and low,
Her presence seemed to radiate a tender,
girlish glow,
And when she placed her hand in his, the
soft, caressing palm

GOING HOME

Was cure for every trouble, and for every
pain a balm:

And she whispered, "Sweet, my sweet-
heart, I'll be faithful, I'll be true;

In the springtime, in the springtime, I will
cross the sea to you." . . .

A little bed was fashioned in the fitful fire-
light glow;

A little boy was murmuring a prayer of long
ago;

And mother-hands upon his head, that
fondled in his hair,

And sense of quiet comfort and respite
from every care;

And a pillow white and downy, and a bed
so soft and deep,

And tired lips were lispng, "Now I lay
me down to sleep." . . .

Again the scene was changed: A flood of
mellow, amber light,

That filled the soul with ecstasy of infinite
delight;

While crystal-cadenced music tinkled
through the yellow glow,

The lullabies of childhood and the songs of
long ago;

GOING HOME

The sea of God on every hand in silent
 silver lay:
An atom fell: its circles spread through
 all eternity.

.

The Thing was gone; its work was done; a
 lump of lifeless clay
Sat crouching, crouching, crouching in the
 dawning of the day;
The frozen eyeballs stared upon a wilder-
 ness of snow,
And peered into the future, to the Place
 no man may know.
A she-wolf prowled about the spot, and
 sniffed below the sleigh,
And howled a melancholy howl, and slunk
 in fear away.

JUST BE GLAD

JUST BE GLAD.

FEELIN' kind of all run down?

Mighty bad:

Sick and tired o' life in town?

Don't be sad:

What you're needing isn't rest:

Square your shoulders, raise your chest;

Pack your turkey; go out West—

Just be glad!

Gone astray in No-Man's-Land?

Silly lad!

Ought to have your carcass tanned

With a gad:

Should ha' kept the narrow track:

Never mind, you can't go back;

Things may not be quite so black—

Just be glad!

JUST BE GLAD

Gone and blown in all your cash
 On a fad?
Livin' now on soup and hash?
 Writin' Dad?
Don't you do it. Here's a tip;
Keep a good stiff upper lip;
Needn't fall because you slip—
 Just be glad!

Friends refuse to help you out?
 Don't get mad!
You would be a lazy lout
 If they had.
Do not envy place or pelf;
Praise the Lord, you've got your health;
Dig in! Be a man yourself—
 Just be glad!

All the world may say or do,
 Good or bad,
Isn't anything to you—
 Just be glad!
Though you work at book or trade,
Though you work with pen or spade,
Hump yourself—you'll make the grade—
 Just be glad!

A PRAIRIE HEROINE

A PRAIRIE HEROINE.

THEY were running out the try-lines, they
were staking out the grade;

Through the hills they had to measure,
through the sloughs they had to
wade;

They were piercing unknown regions, they
were crossing nameless streams,

With the prairie for a pillow and the sky
above their dreams,

They were mapping unborn cities in the
age-long pregnant clay:

When they came upon a little mound across
the right-of-way.

There were violets growing on it, and a
buttercup or two,

That whispered of affection ever old and
ever new,

And a little ring of whitewashed stones,
bright in the summer sun,

But of marble slab or granite pile or pillar
there was none;

And across the sleeping prairie lay a little,
low-built shack,

With a garden patch before it and a wheat-
field at its back.

A PRAIRIE HEROINE

“ Well, boys, we'd better see him, and he
 hadn't ought to kick,
For we'll give him time to move it if he
 does it pretty quick.”
But scarcely had the foreman spoke when
 straight across the farm
They saw the settler coming with a rifle
 on his arm;
Some would ha' hiked for cover but they
 had no place to run,
But most of them decided they would stay
 and see the fun.

The farmer was the first to speak: “ I hate
 to interfere,
And mighty glad I am to see the railway
 comin' near,
But before you drive your pickets across
 this piece of land
You ought to hear the story, or you will
 not understand:
It's the story of a girl who was as true as
 she was brave,
And all that now remains of her is in that
 little grave.

“ I didn't want to bring her when I hit the
 trail out West,
I knew I shouldn't do it, and I did my
 level best

A PRAIRIE HEROINE

To coax her not to come out for a year or
two at least,
But to stay and take it easy with her
friends down in the East;
But while I coaxed and argued I was
feelin' mighty glum,
And right down in my heart I kep' a-hopin'
she would come.

“ Well, by rail and boat and saddle we got
out here at last,
A-livin' in the future, and forgettin' of
the past;
We built ourselves a little home, and in
our work and care
It seemed to me she always took what was
the lion's share;
God knows just what she suffered, but she
hid it with a smile,
And made out that she thought I was the
only thing worth while.

“ She stood it through the summer and the
warm, brown days of fall,
And of all the voices calling her she would
not hear the call;
But when the winter settled with its cold,
white pall of snow

A PRAIRIE HEROINE

She seemed to whiten with it, but she
thought I didn't know;
She tried to keep her spirits up and laugh
my fears away,
But I saw her growing thin and ever
weaker day by day.

"At last I couldn't stand it any longer, so
I said,
'I think you'd better try and spend a day
or two in bed
While I go for a doctor. It's only sixty
miles.'
She gave a little wistful look, half hidden
in her smiles,
And said, 'Perhaps you'd better, though
I think I'll be all right
When the spring comes.' . . . Well, I
started out that night.

"I made the trip on horseback, by the guid-
ing Polar star,
And a dozen times the distance never
seemed one-half so far.
But the doctor had gone out of town,—
just where, no one could say,
And a lump rose in my chest that fairly
took my breath away.

A PRAIRIE HEROINE

But I daren't stay there thinking, and my
search for him was vain,
So I bought some wine and brandy and I
started home again.

“ Forgetful of my horse, I spent the whole
night on the road,
Till early in the morning he collapsed
beneath his load;
I saw the brute was done for, and although
it made me cry,
I hacked into his jug'lar vein and left him
there to die:
And then I shouldered the supplies and
staggered on alone,
And thinking of my wife's distress I quite
forgot my own.

“ She must ha' watched all night for me,
for in the morning grey
She saw me stagger in the snow and fall
beside the way,
And God knows how she did it—she was
only skin and bone—
But she came out here and found me and
dragged me home alone,
And she took the precious liquor that had
cost us all so dear,
And poured it down this worthless hulk
that's standin' blattin' here. . . .

A PRAIRIE HEROINE

“ I guess you know what happened—I lived,
 she passed away;
I robed her in her wedding-dress and laid
 her in the clay;
And every spring I plant the flowers that
 grow upon her grave,
For I hold the spot as sacred as the
 Arimathæan’s cave;
And when the winter snows have come,
 and all is white and still,
I spread a blanket on the mound to keep
 out frost and chill.

“ Folks say I’ve got a screw loose, that
 I’ve gone to acting queer,
But I sometimes hear her speaking, and I
 know she’s always near;
And sometimes in the night I feel the
 pressure of her hand,
And for a blessed hour I share with her
 the Promised Land:—
Let man or devil undertake to desecrate
 my dead
And as sure as God’s in heaven I will
 pump him full of lead.”

They were rough-and-ready railway men
 who stood about the spot,

A PRAIRIE HEROINE

They were men that lied and gambled,
they were men that drank and
fought,

But some of them were sneezing, and some
were coughing bad,

And some were blowing noses on anything
they had;

And some of them were swallowing at
lumps that shouldn't come,

And some were swearing softly, and some
were simply dumb.

At last the foreman found his voice: "I
guess your claim is sound;

I wouldn't care to run a track across that
piece of ground. . . .

We'll have to change our lay-out . . .
but I hope . . . we have the
grace

To build a fitting monument to mark that
holy place;

Put me down for a hundred; now, boys,
how much for you?"

And they answered in a chorus. "We'll see
the business through."

.

A PRAIRIE HEROINE

The passengers upon a certain railway o'er
the plain
See a shining shaft of marble from the
windows of the train,
But they do not know the story of the
girl-wife in the snow
And the broken-hearted farmer with his
lonely life of woe,
And none of them have guessed that the
deflection in the line
Is the railway-builders' tribute to a prairie
heroine.

THE SEER

THE SEER.

IN the dingy dust of his deerskin tent sat
the chief of a dying race,
And the lake that lapt at his wigwam door
threw back a frowning face,
And a sightless squaw at the centre-pole
crooned low in a hybrid speech,
When a man of God swept round the
point and landed on the beach.

The heavy eyes grew bright with fire, the
lips shaped to a sneer—
“Welcome, my paleface brother, what good
news brings you here?
Are you come with the voice of healing,
with the book of your blameless
breed,
To soothe my soul with comfort while my
body gnaws with need?”

THE SEER

“ Welcome, O paleface brother ; come, what
have you to fear?
Mayhap the redskin chieftain can teach as
well as hear ;
And while we sing your sacred songs and
breathe your mystic prayer,
Who knows what inspiration may come on
the ev'ning air? . . .

“ Listen ; you are a scholar, schooled in the
pale-face lore :
'Tis said a dying saint may sometimes see
the shining shore ;
That closing eyes peer far beyond the realm
of mortal sight,—
Who knows but that a dying race may
read the road aright?

“ A dying race ! We know it ; the land is
ours no more,
No more we roam the prairies as in the
days of yore ;
The brave, free spirit that was ours is
crushed and passed away,
And bodies without spirits are predestined
to decay.

THE SEER

“No matter. In the summertime the
flowers bloom in the grass,
The startled insects flood the fields and
chirrup as you pass,
The birds sing in the bushes; but before
the wintry blast
The flowers and the insects and the little
birds are past.

“Yet once again the spring will come, the
flowers will bloom again,
And insects chirrup blithely where the
former ones are lain;
The white snows of the wintertime will
vanish in the heat,
And out-door life and color will follow
their defeat.

“Can the paleface read the riddle? Has he
eyes to see the signs?
Or thinketh he that snow will lie forever
on the pines?
That housed-up life can triumph for the
mastery of state,
Or cushioned chairs produce a race de-
stined to dominate?

THE SEER

“ Behold, the things your hands have done,
the power your arts have won—
Behold, those things shall vanish as the
snow before the sun;
The snow that smothered out the red—ah,
hear it if you can—
Shall leave the earth as suddenly, *and*
leave it brown and tan.

“ Hear ye a little lesson—surely ye know
its worth—
Only an out-door nation can be master of
the earth;
Soon as ye seek your couches, soft with the
spoils of trade—
See well to your outer trenches before the
mines are laid!

“ Hear ye a little lesson—can ye the truth
divine?
Milk ye may mix with water, and water
will mix with wine;
Mix as ye may on your prairies, mix in
your hope, and toil,
But know in all your mixing that water
won't mix with oil!”

THE SEER

In the dingy dusk of his deerskin tent sat
the chief of a dying race,
And the glow of holy prophecy lit up his
rugged face,
And the foremost light of the setting sun
fell far on an eastern land,—
*And who shall save the paleface if he will
not understand?*

THE SON OF MARQUIS NODDLE

THE SON OF MARQUIS NODDLE.

HE is brand-new out from England, and
he thinks he knows it all—

(There's a bloomin' bit o' goggle in his
eye)

The "colonial" that crosses him is going
to get a fall—

(There's a seven-pound revolver on his
thigh).

He's a son of Marquis Noddle, he's a
nephew of an earl,

In the social swim of England he's got
'em all aw whirl,

He's as confident as Cæsar and as pretty
as a girl—

Oh, he's out in deadly earnest, do or die.

They will spot him in the cities by the
cowhide on his feet—

(They were built for crushing cobble-
stones at 'ome)

And the giddy girls will giggle when they
see him on the street—

(There's a brand-new cowboy hat, upon
his dome).

THE SON OF MARQUIS NODDLE

He has come from home and kindred to
the land beyond the sea,
To the far-famed land of plenty, to the
country of the free,
But he can't forget he owns it from Cape
Race to Behring Sea—
He is coming just as Cæsar would to
Rome.

When his pile is getting slender he'll go
looking for a job,
(And he thinks he ought to get it, don't-
cherknow)

But he finds that he must mingle with the
common city mob
(How *can* they think that he would
stoop so low?).

So he hikes him to the country, where the
rustics will be proud

To salute him when they meet him, and to
whisper, nice and loud,

“He's the son of Marquis Noddle,—you
would know him in a crowd”—

They will pay him there the homage that
they owe.

In the little country village he will manu-
facture mirth—

(For it's there they take the measure of
a swell)

THE SON OF MARQUIS NODDLE

They will soon proceed to teach him that
he doesn't own the earth

(With a quit-claim on the sun and moon
as well).

They will show him that the country isn't
altogether slow,

And that they can travel any pace that he's
a mind to go;

He will be a right good fellow till they run
him out of dough—

Oh, it is a tale of merriment they tell!

So to keep his bones together he goes
working on a farm,

(Where they get up at a little after two)

Where they think to take him down a peg
will not do any harm,

(And they sleep when there is nothing
else to do).

Where they work him like a nigger nearly
twenty hours a day,

And they don't disguise the fact that they
consider him a jay,

And he eats so much and sleeps so much
he isn't worth his pay—

Oh, it doesn't matter that his blood is
blue.

THE SON OF MARQUIS NODDLE

He decides to do a season as a cowboy in
the West,
(Where they call a man a boy until he's
dead)
And he tries to walk a-swagger with a
military chest,
(And he isn't overslept or overfed).
They will set him breaking bronchos, though
it's little to his mind;
With many new-learned epithets he'll per-
forate the wind—
How can he know the boys have stuck a
thistle on behind?
He will end the exhibition on his head.
They will fill him full of liquor that'll
frizzle his inside,
(In the cooler he can square it with his
God).
He will spend his nights in places where
the *demi-monde* reside,
(In the morning he'll be minus watch
and wad).
They'll abuse him as a youngster, they will
mock him as a man,
They'll make his life a thorny path in every
way they can,
Till he curses his existence and the day
that it began,
And he wishes he was rotting in the sod.

THE SON OF MARQUIS NODDLE

He will write long tales to England, tales
of bitterness and woe,
(They will print 'em in the papers over
there).

He will tell them pretty nearly everything
he doesn't know,
(And they'll take it all for gospel over
there).

He will tell them that the country isn't fit
for gentlemen,
That any who escape from it do not come
back again,

He is handy with his language and he
wields a bitter pen—
To the truth of each assertion he would
swear.

He's a growler, he's a growser, he's a
nuisance, he's a bum,
(And the country hasn't any room for
such)

And they class him in the papers as
"European scum,"
(They would rather have the Irish or
the Dutch).

He's the butt of every jester, he's the mark
of every joke,
He is wearing borrowed trousers—he has
put his own in soak—

THE SON OF MARQUIS NODDLE

He's a useless good-for-nothing, beaten,
buffeted, and broke,
And of sympathy he won't get over-
much.

.

In a dozen years you'll find him with a
section of his own,
(He had to learn his lesson at the start)
With a happy wife and children he is trying
to atone—

(For he loves the country now with all
his heart).

He's a son of dear old England, he's a
hero, he's a brick;
He's the kind you may annihilate but you
can never lick,
For he played and lost, and played and lost,
and stayed and took the trick;
In a world of men he'll play a manly part.

THE PRODIGALS

THE PRODIGALS.

KNEE-DEEP our prairies link the seas,
Flood-full our voiceless rivers wend;
We hold unturned the larder keys
On which the future years depend:
And shall we suffer alien throngs
Usurp the land to us belongs?

What though we are to fortune born
And all our paths are paved with gold?
We flaunt our folly up to scorn,
Because we keep not what we hold:
Why should we rob our right of
birth
To foster all the breeds of earth?

We picture with unfeigned dismay
Man-glutted lands of other flags,
They multiply but to decay,
And rot in pestilence and rags;
Why hasten we to emulate
These helpless tragedies of Fate?

THE PRODIGALS

The land our children's sons will need,
That land we have wide open thrown
To heathen knaves of other breed
And paunchy pirates of our own:
We give away earth's greatest prize,
And pat ourselves, and call us wise.

No father he who to the slums
For husband to his child would send,
And no one worthy of her comes
She lives a maiden to the end:
Yet we have placed our virgin trust
In spawn of Continental lust.

If dumb we be to Reason's cries—
Our children's cause she pleads in vain—
Our outraged sons at length will rise
And seize their heritage again;
And fools, who prate of vested right,
Will either cease to prate—or fight.

The land is ours, the land will keep,
And Time is nowise near its end;
We hold our birthright all too cheap
Its sacredness to comprehend;
In after years our sons will say,
“Why frittered ye the land away?”

THE SQUAD OF ONE

THE SQUAD OF ONE.

SERGEANT BLUE of the Mounted Police was
a so-so kind of a guy;
He swore a bit, and he lied a bit, and he
boozed a bit on the sly;
But he held the post at Snake Creek Bend
for country and home and God,
And he cursed the first and forgot the rest
—which wasn't the least bit odd.

Now the life of the North-West Mounted
Police breeds an all-round kind of
man;
A man who can jug a down-South thug
when he rushes the red-eye can;
A man who can pray with a dying bum or
break up a range stampede—
Such are the men of the Mounted Police
and such are the men they breed.

THE SQUAD OF ONE

The snow lay deep at the Snake Creek post
and deep to east and west,
And the Sergeant had made his ten-league
beat and settled down to rest
In his two-by-four that they called a
"post," where the flag flew over-
head,
And he took a look at his monthly mail,
and this is the note he read:

"To Sergeant Blue of the Mounted Police
at the post of Snake Creek Bend,
From U. S. Marshal of County Blank,
greetings to you, my friend,
They's a team of toughs give us the slip,
though they shot up a couple of
blokes.
And we reckon they's hid in Snake Creek
Gulch and posin' as farmer folks.

"They's as full of sin as a barrel of booze
and as quick as a cat with a gun,
So if you happen to hit their trail be first
to start the fun;
And send out your strongest squad of men
and round them up if you can,
For dead or alive we want them here.
Yours truly, Jack McMann."

THE SQUAD OF ONE

And Sergeant Blue sat back and smiled,
"Ho, here is a chance of game!
Folks 'round here have been so good that
life is getting tame;
I know the lie of Snake Creek Gulch
—where I used to set my traps—
I'll blow out there to-morrow and I'll
bring them in—perhaps."

Next morning Sergeant Blue, arrayed in
farmer smock and jeans,
In a jumper sleigh he had made himself
set out for the evergreens
That grow on the bank of Snake Creek
Gulch by a homestead shack he
knew.
And a smoke curled up from the chimney-
pipe to welcome Sergeant Blue.

"Aha, and that looks good to me," said
the Sergeant to the smoke.
"For the lad that owns this homestead
shack is East in his wedding-yoke:
There are strangers here, and I'll bet a
farm against a horn of booze
That they are the bums that are predestined
to dangle in a noose."

THE SQUAD OF ONE

So he drove his horse to the shanty door
and hollered a loud "Good-day,"
And a couple of men with fighting-irons
came out beside the sleigh,
And the Sergeant said, "I'm a stranger
here and I've driven a weary mile;
If you don't object I'll just sit down by
the stove in the shack awhile."

So the Sergeant sat and smoked and talked
of the home he had left down East,
And the cold, and the snow, and the price
of land, and the life of man and
beast,
But all of a sudden he broke it off with,
"Neighbors, take a nip?
There's a horn of the best you'll find out
there in my jumper, in the grip."

So one of the two went out for it, and as
soon as he closed the door
The other one staggered back as he gazed
up the nose of a forty-four,
But the Sergeant wasted no words with
him, "Now, fellow, you're on the
rocks,
And a noise as loud as a mouse from you
and they'll take you out in a box."

THE SQUAD OF ONE

So he fastened the bracelets to his wrists
and his legs with some binder-thread,
And he took his knife and he took his gun
and he rolled him on to the bed;
And then as number two came in he said,
"If you want to live,
Put up your dukes and behave yourself or
I'll make you into a sieve."

And when he had coupled them each to
each, and laid them out on the bed,
"It's cold, and I guess we'd better eat be-
fore we go," he said.
So he fried some pork and he warmed some
beans, and he set out the best he
saw,
And they ate thereof, and he paid for it,
according to British law.

That night in the post sat Sergeant Blue
with paper and pen in hand,
And this is the word he wrote and signed
and mailed to a foreign land:
"To U. S. Marshal of County Blank,
greetings I give to you;
My squad has just brought in your men,
and the squad was
"Sergeant Blue."

THE SQUAD OF ONE

*There are things unguessed, there are tales
untold, in the life of the great lone
land,
But here is a fact that the prairie-bred
alone may understand,
That a thousand miles in the fastnesses
the fear of the law obtains.
And the pioneers of justice were the
"Riders of the Plains."*

ALKALI HALL

ALKALI HALL.

WHEN Lord Landseeker came out West to
 have a look around,
And spend a little money if the right thing
 could be found,
He hadn't breathed the prairie air more
 than a day or two
Until he was the centre of a philanthropic
 crew
Who sought to show His Lordship all the
 short-cuts to success
(Though why they should have troubled,
 His Lordship couldn't guess,
For each was losing money, as he candidly
 confest,
Which seemed to be a fashion with the
 dealers in the West.)

Thus His Lordship grew suspicious that
 his "friends" would turn him down,
And he quietly bought a ticket to a little
 country town;
But he didn't know the message that was
 flashed along the wire
To a simple country dealer in the land of
 his desire;

ALKALI HALL

And it read: "Look out for Goggles,
he'll be with you this a.m."
And the crowd around the station—well, he
merely smiled to them,
And thought it jolly decent they'd assemble,
don'tcherknow,
And file along behind him as they followed,
in a row.

The snow had fallen softly all the calm
November night,
And the morning found the prairies with a
covering of white;
But His Lordship took a citizen who
"happened" in his way,
And they drove into the country for the
most part of the day,
Until they reached a section that was flat
and free from stone,
And the citizen remarked about a fellow
he had known
Who offered thirty dollars for this section
in the fall,
But the owner wanted forty, or he wouldn't
sell at all.
Then His Lordship drove across it, and
it seemed to catch his eye,
And he whispered to the driver, "That's
the section I will buy;"

ALKALI HALL

So in town they found the owner, who was
 very loath to sell,
But he finally consented, if His Lordship
 wouldn't tell
That the price was forty dollars by the
 acre; this agreed,
A lawyer drew the papers and His Lord-
 ship got the deed,
And he sailed across the ocean with the
 satisfying thought
That he'd followed his own judgment in
 the bargain he had bought.

The winter snows had vanished and the
 spring was growing late,
When Lord Landseeker came again to view
 his real estate,
And he drove out in a buggy to where his
 section lay,
And his heart was very happy as he
 smoked along the way
Till the section burst upon them, and he
 scarce believed his sight,
For the land lay in the sunshine, flashing
 back a snowy white
And His Lordship stooped and felt it, and
 he heaved a little sigh,
As the knowledge dawned upon him that
 his land was—*alkali!*

ALKALI HALL

His Lordship did some thinking as they
 journeyed back to town,
And his wonted happy features were o'er-
 shadowed with a frown;
But he neither crawled nor blustered,
 neither bluffed nor swore nor kicked,
(For the men from little England never
 know when they are licked),
But he advertised for tenders for con-
 struction on the land,
And the buildings he erected were the best
 he could command;
With a hundred rooms for students, and
 quarters for the staff,
And the workmen often wondered what
 made His Lordship laugh!

In the papers of Old England there ap-
 peared a little ad,
For the benefit of parents whose sons were
 going bad;
"Teach your boys the art of farming in
 the great Canadian West;
Our instruction is unrivalled, our cur-
 riculum the best;
There's a grate in every chamber and a
 bath in every hall,
And a full dress-suited dinner every ev'n-
 ing, free to all;

ALKALI HALL

There is tennis, polo, marksmanship, and
half the day in bed,
And we make them into farmers for a
hundred pounds a head."

His Lordship's college prospers and is
crowded to the doors
With "students" playing poker while the
"servants" do the chores;
What they do not know of farming they
make up in other lines,
They are judges of tobacco and connois-
seurs of wines:
They are experts at the races and at
sundry other games—
Though they couldn't tell the breeching of
the harness from the hames—
Though they're far from home and kindred
they occasion no alarm,
*That was what their parents wanted when
they sent them out to farm.*

PRAIRIE BORN

PRAIRIE BORN.

We have heard the night wind howling as
we lay alone in bed ;
We have heard the grey goose honking as
he journeyed overhead ;
We have smelt the smoke-wraith flying in
the hot October wind,
And have fought the fiery demon that came
roaring down behind ;
We have seen the spent snow sifting
through the key-hole of the door,
And the frost-line crawling, crawling, like
a snake, along the floor ;
We have felt the storm-fiend wrestle with
the rafters in his might,
And the baffled blizzard shrieking through
the turmoil of the night.

We have felt the April breezes warm along
the plashy plains ;
We have mind-marked to the cadence of
the falling April rains ;
We have heard the crash of water where
the snow-fed rivers run,
Seen a thousand silver lakelets lying shin-
ing in the sun ;

PRAIRIE BORN

We have known the resurrection of the
Springtime in the land,
Heard the voice of Nature calling and the
words of her command,
Felt the thrill of springtime twilight and
the vague, unfashioned thought
That the season's birthday musters from
the hopes we had forgot.

We have heard the cattle lowing in the
silent summer nights;
We have smelt the smudge-fire fragrance
—we have seen the smudge-fire
lights—
We have heard the wild duck grumbling
to his mate along the bank;
Heard the thirsty horses snorting in the
stream from which they drank;
Heard the voice of Youth and Laughter
in the long, slow-gloaming night;
Seen the arched electric splendor of the
Great North's livid light;
Read the reason of existence—felt the
touch that was divine—
And in eyes that glowed responsive saw
the End of God's design.

PRAIRIE BORN

We have smelt the curing wheat-fields and
the scent of new-mown hay;
We have heard the binders clatter through
the dusty autumn day;
We have seen the golden stubble gleaming
through the misty rain;
We have seen the plow-streaks widen as
they turned it down again;
We have heard the threshers humming in
the cool September night;
We have seen their dark procession by
the straw-piles' eerie light;
We have heard the freight-trains groan-
ing, slipping, grinding, on the rail,
And the idle trace-chains jingle as they
jogged along the trail.

We have felt the cold of winter—cursed
by those who know it not—
We have braved the blizzard's vengeance,
dared its most deceptive plot;
We have learned that hardy races grow
from hardy circumstance,
And we face a dozen dangers to attend a
country dance;
Though our means are nothing lavish we
have always time for play,
And our social life commences at the clos-
ing of the day;

PRAIRIE BORN

We have time for thought and culture,
time for friendliness and friend,
And we catch a broader vision as our
aspirations blend.

We have hopes to others foreign, aims
they cannot understand,
We, the "heirs of all the ages," we, the
first-fruits of the land;
Though we think with fond affection of
the shores our fathers knew,
And we honor all our brothers—for a
brother's heart is true—
Though we stand with them for progress,
peace, and unity, and power,
Though we die with them, if need be, in
our nation's darkest hour—
Still the prairies call us, call us, when all
other voices fail,
And the call we knew in childhood is the
call that must prevail.

"A COLONIAL"

"A COLONIAL."

(In some circles the term "colonial" is still allowed to imply inferiority and dependence.)

ONLY a Colonial!

Only a man of nerve and heart
Who has spurned the ease of the life
"at home,"

Only a man who would play his part
In a new breed-birth on a distant
loam;

Only a man of sense and worth
Who is not afraid of the ends of earth.

Only a Colonial!

Only a man who has cornered Fate
And matched his strength with the
Unattained:

Only the guard at the Outer Gate,
Who holds for you what he has
gained,

That your children, seized of a better
sense,

May share with him Toil's recompense.

" A COLONIAL "

Only a Colonial!

Only a man who has bridged the deep,
And stained the map a British hue,
Who builds an Empire while ye sleep
And deeds the ownership to you.
'Tis the Viking blood which gave you
birth
That has driven him to the ends of
earth.

Only a Colonial!

Wherever the flag that ye think is great
Is flown to the farthest winds that
blow,
Wherever the colonists ye berate
In their blind faith-vision onward go,
Ye may find ye hearts that are British
still—
In your self-conceit do ye count them
nil?

Only a Colonial!

Rough as the bark of his forest tree
His ways may seem to the fat and
sleek,
But ye owe your Empire to such as he,
Though the hoar-frost glisten on his
cheek;

" A COLONIAL "

He has carried your flag where ye dared
not go,
And little ye reckon of the debt ye owe.

Only a Colonial!

No doubt he is raw on your social laws
And grates on your sense of caste and
creed,

But he lives too near to Facts and Cause
To study heraldry and breed;

And, knowing man in his primal state,
He scorns the claims of the social great.

Only a Colonial!

The name in cheap contempt ye fling,

Is not the whim of birth or chance,

We well ignore the flippant sting,

Or charge it to your ignorance;

The colonist, and sons of his,

Have made the Empire what it is.

LITTLE TIM TROTTER

LITTLE TIM TROTTER.

LITTLE Tim Trotter was born in the West,
Where the prairie lies sunny and brown;
Never was, surely, so welcome a guest
In the stateliest halls of the town;
For Little Tim Trotter was thoughtful and
brave,
And a lover of summer and shower,
And Little Tim Trotter took less than he
gave
To the hearts that were under his
power.

Little Tim Trotter would play in the sun,
Or lie in the buffalo grass,
And in fancy he saw the wild buffalo run
And the brave-riding Indians pass;
And with eyes that were deep as the in-
finite blue
He would picture himself at their head,
For no one so young as this hunter-man
knew
That the herds and the riders were dead.

LITTLE TIM TROTTER

Little Tim Trotter would lie in his bed
While the fire-light played low on the
floor,
And strange were the thoughts that in
Little Tim's head
Played low like the fire at the door;
The hopes that were his, and the wonders
he knew.
And the yearning he had in his heart,
With the glimmering light of the future in
view.
And Little Tim just at the start!

Little Tim Trotter has heard the long call
And has answered with joy and sur-
prise,
And the thoughts and the things that are
hid from us all
To-day are revealed to his eyes;
And he rides in the van of his buffalo
herd,
Or in camp with his Indians brave;
But Little Tim Trotter speaks never a
word
Through the mound of a little green
grave.

THE OLD GUARD

THE OLD GUARD.

KNEW you the men of the Old Guard?
Men of the camp and trail;
Guard of the van when Time began in the
land of grass and gale,
Of a sky-wide land they seized command
where the mightiest prevail.

Who were the men of the Old Guard?
Giants of strength and will,
Trained in the school of hard-luck rule
and daring to die or kill;
Staking their lives, and their young, and
wives, on the road up Fortune's hill.

Whence were the men of the Old Guard?
Heroes of '82;
From swamp and ledge and ocean's edge
they came to see and do,
And they failed at first, and the land they
cursed, but they stayed and strug-
gled through.

THE OLD GUARD

Hope of the men of the Old Guard?
Little but hope was theirs;
With empty hand in an untried land they
clutched at wheat and tares,
And home at night by the wood-fire light
was answer to their prayers.

Way of the men of the Old Guard? What
of their end and way?
You may find their bones by the lime-
white stones where the sun-dried
sleugh-holes lay,
For the Goddess Trade is a costly jade, and
they were the ones to pay.

Joy of the men of the Old Guard? The
joy of the brave and true;
With joy they paced where Death gri-
maced and his icy vapors blew,
And with steady tread they bore their dead
with the faith of the chosen few.

What of the men of the Old Guard? Ask
of the arching skies,
The grass that waves on their leafy graves
is lispng their lullabies,
And the lives they spent are their monu-
ment and their title to Paradise.

KID McCANN.

WHERE the farthest foothills flatten to a
circle-sweeping plain,
And the cattle lands surrender to the on-
ward march of grain,
Where the prairies stretch unbroken to the
corners of the sky,
And the foremost wheat-fields rustle in the
warm winds droning by—
There a crippled cow-boy batches in the
haunts of old-time herds,
And the balance of the story is repeated in
his words:

So you never heard how I lost my leg and
hobble now on a crutch?
So far as the story relates to me it can't
concern you much,
For it's really the story of Kid McCann
and the price that a girl will pay
For the fellow she sets her fancy on, as
only a woman may;
It isn't every girl who proves her faithful-
ness in flames,
But fellows who listen with moistened
eyes speak softly of other names.

KID M'CANN

Ned McCann owned the Double Star 'way
back in the early days;
He had come out here with a sickly wife
and a kid he hoped to raise
Where the climate suited the feeble-
lunged, but life was scarce at its
brim,
Till a little mound by a prairie hill held
half of the world for him;
And his double love would have spoiled the
child had she been like me or you,
But her only thought was for her dad and
the mother she scarcely knew.

'Course, she was bred to the ranges, and
before she had reached her teens
She could straddle a nag with the best of
us and ride in her smock and jeans
Till we all caved in, and she thought it
fun to camp with a round-up bunch,
And she shared her pillow and shared our
sky and shared our pipe and lunch,
And all of us mad in love with her, but
she was only a kid,
And she never dreamt what our feelings
were, or the love-struck things we
did.

KID M'CANN

But even girls grow older, and, though
 always kind and sweet,
There came a day when she realized that
 we were at her feet,
But I had never spoken, nor anyone in the
 camp,
When in came a foreign puncher, a thor-
 oughbred black-leg scamp,
And we who had known her since child-
 hood saw, in our unbelieving eyes,
This wily sinner setting himself to carry
 off the prize.

Of course it couldn't be stood for, and
 little as I might like,
It fell to my lot to intimate to him it was
 time to hike,
Which I did in straight-forward manner,
 in a way to be understood,
And he looked at me with a sulky scowl
 that boded none of us good;
But he did as he was ordered, to be absent
 before night,
And we lost his form in the shadowy East
 as he cantered out of sight.

Next day, as I rode on my cayuse, apart
 from the rest of the gang,
I felt a sudden rip in my leg like the jab
 of a red-hot tang;

KID M'CANN

And my horse went down below me, with
my leg crushed in the clay,
And over me leered that fiendish face, and
he grinned, and rode away;
Rode away to the eastward,—I saw him
fade in the sky,
And crushed and pinned from hip to heel
I counted the hours to die.

How long I lay I could never tell, for the
hours were days to me,
Till struck with sudden terror I tore at
my wounded knee,
For the east wind carried a smoky smell,
and I read in its fiery breath
That half-a-mile of sun-dried grass was all
between me and death;
With my hunting-knife I hacked my leg,
but I couldn't cut the bone,
So I set myself as best I could to face my
fate alone.

The fire came on like a hungry fiend on
the wings of the rising wind,
And I wouldn't care to tell you all the
things that were in my mind;
I saw the sun through the swirling smoke,
and the blue sky far above,

KID M'CANN

And I bade good-bye to the things of earth
and the dearer hopes of love;
And I figured that I had closed accounts
for life's uncertain span,
When a smoke-blind broncho galloped up
and there sat Kid McCann!

There wasn't much time for talking, with
the death-roll in our ears,
But we sometimes live in seconds more
than we could in a thousand years,
And before I could guess her meaning she
had thrown herself on my face,
And spread her leather jacket, which her
warm hands held in place;
I felt her breath in my nostrils and her
finger-tips in my hair,
And through the roar of the burning grass
I fancied I heard a prayer.

'Twas but for a moment; the flames were
gone; unharmed they had passed
me by;
God knows why the useless are spared to
live while the faithful are called to
die,
But the form that had sheltered me
shivered, and seemed to shrivel
away,

KID M'CANN

And when I had raised it clear of my face
I looked into lifeless clay. . . .
And darkness fell, and the world was
black, and the last of my reason
fled,
And when I came to myself again I was
back at the ranch, in bed.

That was back in the Eighties, and still I
am living here;
I built this shanty on the spot; her grave
is lying near;
And when at nights my nostrils sense the
smoke-smell in the air
I seem to feel her form again, and hear
again her prayer;
And then the darkness settles down and
wild night-creatures cry,
But stars come out in heaven and there's
comfort in the sky.

WHO OWNS THE LAND?

WHO OWNS THE LAND?

Who owns the land?

The Duke replied,
"I own the land. My fathers died
In winning it from foreign hands,
They paid in red blood for their lands;
Their swarthy *villains* bit the dust
In founding the Landowners' Trust;
And many generations dead
Substantiate what I have said,
The land belongs to us because
We've had the making of the laws."

Who owns the land?

The Common Man
Said, "Government adopts a plan
By which the land is held in fee
For common folks, like you an' me.
The man who'd alter it's a crank;
I got the transfer—in the bank—
I've little time to think about
These theories silly fellows shout,
I have to work to beat the band
To pay the mortgage on the land."

WHO OWNS THE LAND?

Who owns the land?

The Statesman said,
"The land supplies our daily bread,
And raises wheat, and corn, and oats,
And simple husbandmen—and votes—
The land was won at awful cost
And many soldiers' lives were lost.
Too bad! They're mostly silly boys
Who go to battle for the noise.
Here's a quotation I admire:
'The people's voice is God's desire,'
And as I rule by right divine,
I half suspect the land is mine."

Who owns the land?

The Farmer said,
"What puts that question in yer head?
I own it. Tuk a homestead here
An' lived on it fer twenty year;
I bet a new ten dollar bill
That I could hold it down until
I got the patent, an' I won;
The land is mine, as sure's a gun.
When city blokes come here to shoot,
You bet, they get the icy boot!
But 't made me mighty mad when that
Danged railway come across the flat
An' cut my homestead plumb in two.
But there I wuz—what could I do?"

WHO OWNS THE LAND?

But just set down, resigned to fate,
Fer fear that they'd expropriate."

Who owns the land?

The Speculator
Said, "Land is just an incubator
In which to let your dollars hatch
And, some fine morning—sell the batch."

Who owns the land?

The Indian Chief
Said, "Ugh, the white man mucha thief!
He steal my lan' because he's strong
(By gar, it take him pretty long),
He steal my lan', an' call it law,
He turn me out, me an' my squaw;
He let us die, because we not
Like him, can live in one same spot;
He talk so much of civilize—
He's civil—sometimes—an' he lies!"

Who owns the land?

The Over-Rich
Said, "All these people claim to, which
Is satisfactory to me,
So long as they cannot agree.
Let them arrange it as they will
As long as some one pays the bill.
The present plan is, surely, fine;
The interest, at least, is mine."

WHO OWNS THE LAND?

Who owns the land?

In meek surprise
The child said, "Like the air, and skies,
And running water, flowers, and birds,
And lullabies, and gentle words,
And rosy sunsets, clouds, and storms,
And God revealed in all His forms—
'Tis plain the land's the right of birth
Of every creature on the earth:
*No man can make a grain of sand;
How can he say he owns the land?"*

A RACE FOR LIFE

A RACE FOR LIFE.

(As related for the benefit of the New Arrival.)

YES, stranger, I hev trailed the West
Since I wuz a kid on a bob-tailed nag,
I hev known the old land at its best,
An' packed most ev'ry kind of jag;
I hev rode fer life frum a prairie fire,
An' tramped fer life through a snow
blockade;
I hev crumpled "bad men" by the quire,
But only once hev I been afraid.

I hev lain alone while the red-men crep'
Aroun' me in their fightin'-paint;
I hev soothed the widow while she wep'
Because I'd made her man a saint;
I hev lassoed lobsters frum the East,
Till ev'ry j'int in their system shook,
An' I'd never run frum man or beast
Until I run frum a chinook.

A RACE FOR LIFE

The chinook had his lair in Crow's Nest
Pass,
An' he foraged aroun' the Porcupine
Hills,
But he'd loafed so long that the ranchin'
grass
Had a wool-white cover frum the chills;
An' me, like a chap that wuz not afraid
Of anything with hide an' hair,
Went out in a sleigh to the hills an'
stayed
Till the old chinook might find me
there.

At last, when I thought I had tempted fate
Enough fer a man with a past like mine,
I hitched the bronks an' struck a gait
Along the slopes of the Porcupine;
An' the day wuz as cold as the Polar Sea,
With a nip as keen as a she-wolf fang;
But frost wuz just like food to me,
An' boldly over the fields I sang:

*"I am the man frum the Hole in the
Hills,
Where the Great G. Whiliken capers
'round;*

A RACE FOR LIFE

*I am the gent that pays the bills
When they plant a greenhorn in the
ground;
I am the Finish of folks that think
They can run a bluff on the prairie-
bred,
Fer I give their vitals a fatal kink
When I open up with a shower of
lead."*

An' the cold bit into my nose an' chin,
An' drilled itself to the marrow-bone;
My face wuz drawn in a frozen grin,
An' my fingers rattled like lumps of
stone:
But my heart wuz as brave as an outlaw
stag,
An' I laughed though the frost cut like
a knife;
Till sudden I felt the hind bob drag,
An' I knew I wuz in fer a race fer life.

Out frum his lair the sly chinook
Had hunted me with his fatal breath;
I dared not turn aroun' to look,
Fer to strand on the hillside there wuz
death:

A RACE FOR LIFE

The hot wind sizzled along my back,
An' the sweat stood out on my shoulder-
blade,
So I yelled at the team through the frozen
crack
The roll of the tongue in my mouth had
made—

“Get out o' here: by the Polar Star,
The fiend of the South is on your
heels!”
An' I felt the old sleigh cringe an' jar,
An' fer once I prayed—fer a pair o'
wheels;
But the sleigh stood still as the hind bob
stuck
In mud that rolled to the bolster-rail;
So I slipped the tongue an' cursed my luck
As I straddled a bronk an' hit the trail.

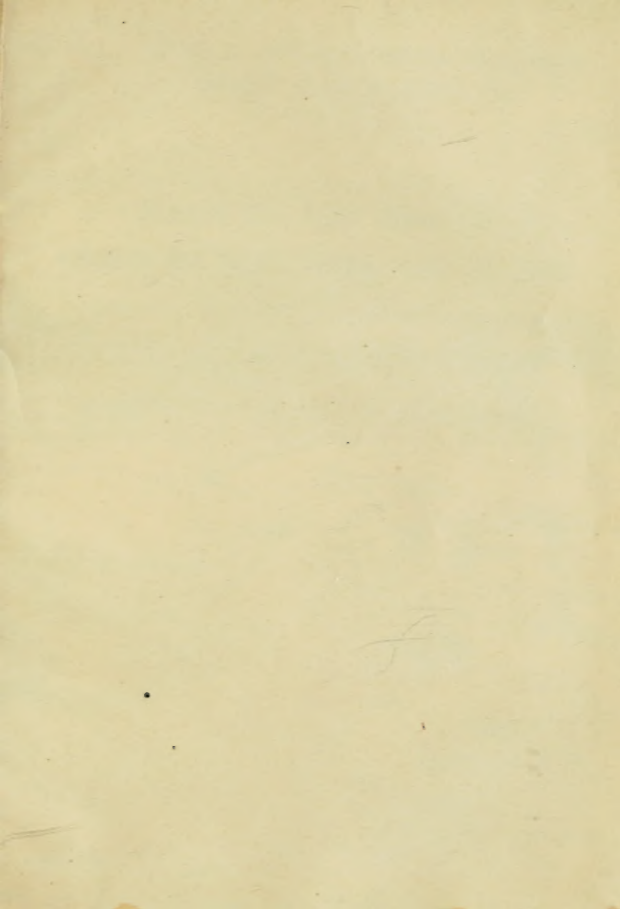
Well, we beat it out by half a neck,
But the broncho's tail was scorched a
sight,
An' I wuz a blistered, parboiled wreck.
An' nearly dead o' heat an' fright;
An' I squatted down in a shady spot
An' fanned myself with a wisp o' hay,
An' the boys on the lower ranches thought
They heard a voice in the chinook say:

A RACE FOR LIFE

*"I am the dope that was made to feed,
To fresh down-Easters just come out;
They'll swallow it all in their green-
horn greed,
An' send it home, beyond a doubt;
I am the caricature an' bluff
That is part of the play of the West-
ern men"—*

What's that? You say you've had
enough?

Well, pass it on to your neighbor, then.





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Stead, Robert James Campbell
Songs of the prairie

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